

MEMORIAL

OF

SUNDRY CITIZENS OF PORTSMOUTH, N. H.

ON THE SUBJECT OF THEIR

CLAIMS AGAINST FRANCE,

FOR

Injuries sustained since A. D. 1806.

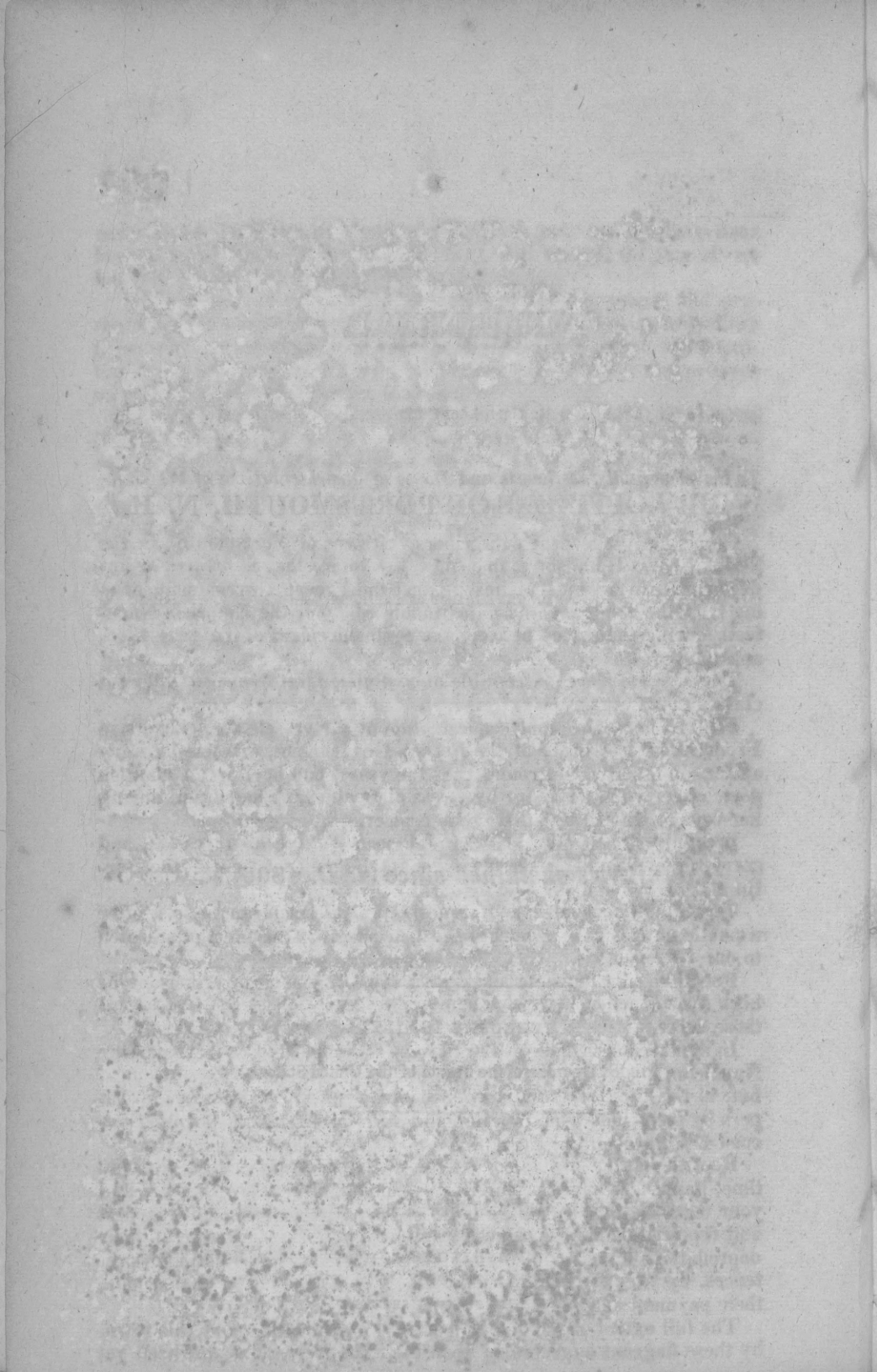
FEBRUARY 12, 1827.

Printed by order of the Senate of the United States.

WASHINGTON :

PRINTED BY GALES & SEATON.

1827.



MEMORIAL.

To the Honorable the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled :

Respectfully shew the subscribers, citizens of Portsmouth, in the State of New Hampshire, that they are interested, as owners or underwriters, in various claims against the French Government, arising from the arbitrary and unjustifiable edicts of the Emperor Napoleon, during the period between the commencement of the year 1806, and the year 1813.

These claims are susceptible of a division into several different classes :

First. The seizure and sequestration of our vessels and cargoes in French Ports, by order of the French Government, or some military officer, on the alleged ground that the vessel had been in an English port, either voluntarily, or by stress of weather, or had been, during her voyage, visited by an English cruiser.

Secondly. The capture on the high seas of American vessels, and carrying them into French ports for an alleged violation of the Berlin and Milan, and other decrees.

Thirdly. The seizure and sequestration of American vessels, after a public notice of the repeal of those decrees had been communicated to our Government.

Fourthly. The burning and destruction of American vessels on the high seas, during the continuance, and after the alleged repeal, of those decrees.

In the three first classes, the cases were submitted to the Emperor Napoleon, or to the examination and judgment of his Prize Courts, but, in the latter, there was only the momentary examination of papers by the commander of a national fleet or ship; and no other record of the proceeding than the log-book of the capturing vessel.

Representations of their particular cases, as they, from time to time, happened, have heretofore been made to the Government, and your memorialists are aware that the Government has made earnest and repeated demands of the French nation, for satisfaction of their depredations on our commerce, and of the various shifts and pretences, by which the admission of their justice has been eluded, and their payment delayed.

The full extent of the losses sustained by the citizens of this town, by these flagrant aggressions upon their commerce, has not been yet

ascertained, but from the best opinion which your memorialists have been able to form of their amount, they will exceed the sum of two hundred thousand dollars.

These claims are principally holden by widows, orphans, and persons whose fortunes have been undermined, or wholly destroyed, by these very depredations upon their property; and if a just remuneration could be obtained, it would alleviate much suffering, and produce much private comfort and happiness.

Believing it to be the duty of the Government to protect its citizens in the prosecution of its lawful commerce against the unprincipled assaults of foreign Powers, assaults in violation of the laws of nations, and the usages of civilized communities, your memorialists respectfully request, and earnestly pray, that these claims may be prosecuted against the French Government by those ulterior measures, to which their justice and magnitude are entitled; the obligations of the Government to its citizens require; and which the wisdom of Congress may suggest.

Portsmouth, December 30, 1826.